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THE

INAUGURATION

OF THE

PATHOLOGICAL BUILDING

OF THE

Bellebue Hospital,

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 25, 1856.

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1856.

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President of the Medical Board.

ISAAC WOOD, M.D.

Consulting Surgeons.

VALENTINE MOTT, M.D., LL.D.

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LEWIS A. SAYRE, M.D.

JOHN A. LIDELL, M.D.

STEPHEN SMITH, M.D.

*John W. G. Bouley M.D. Curator of museum
John W. G. Bouley, M.D.
John W. G. Bouley, M.D.*

INAUGURATION.

SATURDAY the 25th of October, 1856, is likely to be long remembered by the friends of medical and surgical science. The new and commodious edifice recently finished by our able Board of Governors, for the accommodation of the various purposes connected with the Bellevue Hospital, was opened on that day to a large assembly of the students of medical, surgical, and obstetrical science, and the judicious arrangements of that portion of the building designed for public instruction presented in its crowded auditory a sight most gratifying to the enlightened Board of Governors, and the Faculty of Instruction. The disciples of the several schools of Medicine in New York, those of the College of Physicians and Surgeons—of the New York University—and of the Thirteenth Street Medical College, formed a body of some three hundred and upwards, who occupied the seats of the theatre arranged for anatomical and pathological instruction. The several physicians and surgeons of the Bellevue Hospital were in attendance as well as the prominent members of the several Colleges.

The special business of the day was announced by an address to the large audience by JOHN W. FRANCIS, M.D., LL.D., the President of the Medical Board. He gave a concise history of the first introduction of clinical instruction in Great Britain, and of the practical labors of the late eminent Dr. Saunders, of London, to whom was awarded the claims of having been the original projector of clinical lectures at Guy's Hospital, now nearly a century ago. The vast advantage of that species of instruction was dwelt upon by the venerable speaker, who related some interesting incidents on the subject, a knowledge of which he had derived from the lips of Dr. Saunders himself in his interviews with him at his retreat at Enfield, some forty years since.

With a letter of introduction, said Dr. Francis, furnished me by Dr. Samuel Bard, the second President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and who had been a fellow-pupil with Saunders at Edinburgh, I approached him with due reverence. He was now at least midway between seventy and eighty years old. He surpassed the ordinary size, and, I think, might have had the bulk of some two hundred pounds and more. His countenance was of a sweet and benignant aspect, with almost the freshness of youth; his features

regular and well proportioned; his front full and elevated; his nose was well proportioned, and his gray eyes, arched with thick brows, bespoke intelligence. I saw no hirsute developments about him, save his ample locks of driven snow, and his formidable queue, of at least one inch in diameter, and extending down his back to the verge of the sacral region. It needed but little elongation to make a respectable walking cane. His hand had the delicacy of a lady's. He wore a full-dressed black coat, with large side pockets, a yellow vest, black silk breeches, and broad silver shoe buckles. His whole bearing seemed like that of a gentleman of superior talents, retired from an eminent position. With an utterance somewhat grave, yet free and distinct, he spoke of his collegiate days at Edinburgh with his associate Bard. He spoke of the London schools of his earlier days with those of the present time; of his career as a clinical teacher; of John Hunter; the prospects of the American schools, etc. All that he said was delivered with a deep conviction of the sober trusts that had been confided to him, and with an emphatic and distinct articulation. Such was Dr. William Saunders, the author of one of our most popular text-books in my student's day; chronologically the *first* clinical instructor of London. As he had, during his long life and prominent situation, imparted knowledge to many of the men of our own land whose renown has reached you, I could not but give these reminiscences of him. The reflections which arise in contemplating this old teacher, the first who installed clinical science as a distinct branch of the profession, I must leave within your own bosoms. You, gentlemen, come here from remote parts, and I thought you would like to know something of the *personel* of Dr. Saunders.

It has been often said that the organization of an Italian opera, demanded a combination of talents which could be the result only of a union of artistic powers of the highest order, and that such a work gave assurance of the combined wisdom and genius of man superior to any other proofs of his emotional and reasoning faculties. By the lovers of the melodious strain and of expressive harmony, this encomium may be received as justifiable of the various emotions; yet I think I am warranted to affirm, from a long survey of humanity, that institutions, such as those to which our common labors are appropriated, are the very essence of that christianity we profess to recognize as a ruling power—the active principle of social relationship and of individual virtue: they concentrate, if I may be allowed so to express myself, the very marrow of the laws of Mount Sinai, and the doctrines of Him who came with healing on His wings. Can you tell me of a sub-

limer sight than that of Cheselden, whose name you must revere as among the illustrious in our profession, conducting in the closest bonds of friendship, the bard of all time the tuneful Pope, in his visitation through the Hospital to survey, as the proper study of man, the sickness and the sorrows, the hopes and the triumphs of the Chelsea pensioners, under the treatment of that great master, whose skill, like the miracle of his Redeemer, poured eye-sight on the blind. Mozart and Rosini may have exalted our feelings to an immeasurable height, and overwhelmed the tenderest sensibilities of the soul, and softened, by cadences, the roughest nature. Our glorious Cheselden challenges a still loftier recognition, and a future Reubens and Leonardo might find in his active life a befitting theme for their grandest conceptions.

But the circumstances of the hour forbid enlargement on the dignity and the graces which hospitals stamp upon the humanities of the age. We are now to glance a little more professionally at the subject. How much has medical and surgical science abroad been promoted by this organization! In our own country like evidence of their great utility is daily demonstrated. Our greatest physicians, as well as our greatest surgeons, have, with few exceptions, been schooled in such institutions; and the wholesome exhibition presented before us to-day of almost an army of young men watching the operations of the surgeon's knife and listening to his practical precepts, from his verbal disquisitions, furnish a contrast most cheering to the friends of science and humanity, compared with times gone by, when a Hunter and a Fordyce lectured to classes amounting to not more than a dozen or twenty hearers. Our Bellevue Hospital, added the speaker, embraces every appliance the student needs; ample room, diseases of every variety in nosological nomenclature, accidents of every species for surgical manipulation; all for the triumphs of clinical science, medical and chirurgical, such as few other institutions can boast, and surpassing in numbers almost every other establishment of a similar nature throughout our wide-spread republic. In making these observations, (added Dr. F.,) let us not forget the arduous labors and services of the distinguished men, our predecessors, who have toiled in this best of causes:—Drs. Isaac Wood, Benjamin Ogden, David M. Reese, and others, and let us remember, with gratitude, how, for years past, our present associates have devoted their time and talents in the furtherance of this great design. The reputation of New York in the domain of surgery stands on a broad foundation. Her Mott, her Stevens, her Post, her Kissam, are not to be overlooked, when the records of scientific surgery are unfolded for your contemplation.

I hesitate not to say, concluded the speaker, that this present new and commodious arrangement for clinical knowledge will prove a permanent blessing to the afflicted poor and the helpless sufferer, as well as to your intellectual and professional distinction; and, I am thrice happy to add, that for the special assistance which has so happily brought to such an issue this worthy design, there is not one of you who will not speak in accents of gratitude and regard the name of our liberal and enlightened coöperator, Surgeon James R. Wood. Conflicting elements have yielded to his energetic action; discordant views have harmonized with his wiser deliberations; the constituted authorities have yielded to his benevolent requests, and the new edifice is now ready for your benefit. Gentlemen, I now have the pleasure of introducing to this assembly Dr. Valentine Mott, so long and so widely known in both worlds as the unrivaled operator in surgery. Amidst great cheering, Professor Mott came forward.

Dr. Mott congratulated the large convention of students who filled the Hall, on the auspicious circumstances which marked the day; he spoke at some length of the value of clinical knowledge as the only basis of sound practice, both in medicine and surgery, and referred to the earlier period of his professional career, when, in 1810, he first projected, in Columbia College, a course of Clinical Surgery in New York. He had ever considered it the only safe and reliable method to make a sound and effective operator. Yet this surgery must, like every department of the art, be founded on anatomical knowledge, and this only could be obtained by the severest toil and devotion in the dissecting room. Days and nights, nay years, may be appropriated to the investigations which the scalpel unfolds, in order to render our surgical designs triumphant. With becoming deference he paid the tribute of the highest praise to his late associate in hospital and collegiate duties, Dr. Wright Post; his anatomy was his passport; on that he (Dr. P.) had built his far-famed renown as a surgeon. Professor Mott then added, I will now proceed, without further introduction, to give you, with the *cadaver* before me, the anatomy of hernia. The distinguished teacher then fulfilled his design, with an animation and an earnestness that convinced his audience that in his hands the art of teaching had not lost its skill after a devotion of fifty years, and that time had not impaired either his manual dexterity, or his descriptive powers.

PROF. STEVENS, late President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, so long known in the chirurgical world, was then introduced. He said he had little to add to the remarks which had been already

offered on this most interesting occasion. He fully coincided in the enlarged views which had been presented at this meeting in behalf of the value of clinical knowledge, and congratulated the students upon the ample means now presented them to prosecute their studies in the most successful manner, to secure their laudable designs. He was aware how years had rolled on, how many efforts had been made, and how devoted had been his colleagues to secure the noble object with which they had at first set out. The work is now finished, and thanks to the unceasing efforts, in a great degree, of our friend, Dr. James R. Wood; and you, gentlemen, are to be the favored recipients of all these advantages. Let your devotion be as sincere as the efforts of our Medical Board have been praiseworthy. Our pride will be to behold you going forth to answer your responsible duties, appropriately disciplined in the learning of our science, and in an especial manner with that wisdom which clinical experience alone yields.

PROF. WILLARD PARKER, upon invitation, addressed the meeting, with a conviction that at length the medical students could here resort with safety and with profit for clinical knowledge. We abound in great charities for the relief of the suffering poor, and for the treatment of their infirmities, physical and mental. Our New York Hospitals, said the Professor, challenges our highest regard as a noble charity, and as a great clinical school. He enumerated many others of the large and commodious institutions with which our city abounds, as the Bloomingdale Asylum, the Emigrant Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, all under a wise control for the interests of humanity, for the cure of disease, for the advancement of medical science, and to lessen in every way the ills to which "flesh is heir to." He detailed with much minuteness the various efforts which from time to time had been adopted to promote the advancement of the students of medicine and surgery, and he now congratulated them that the work was completed, and the end worthy of the labor. "Finis coronat opus." The several individuals who had promoted this good cause were passed in review before him; the Board of Governors, he was rejoiced to say, had tendered to them all that could be desired, and the Medical Board could not but, in return, offer them their grateful homage. In conclusion, said Dr. Parker, let us not overlook the fact, that for these blessings, for so I must call them, great as is our obligation to many, we, of all others that might be enumerated, are most indebted to Dr. Wood; he has never wearied nor ever tired in his charitable and beneficent design. The address of Dr. P. was of some length, and listened to with interest. Loud call was now made for Dr. Wood.

Dr. JAMES R. WOOD, so long a prominent surgeon of the Bellevue Hospital arose and thanked the audience for the tokens of approval for his services which they now so freely gave. He said he had for nearly twenty years given much of his time, and his humble abilities to bring about the favorable result which they now had before them. No city of the Union presents so many opportunities for the promotion of the medical and surgical art, nowhere are there materials to build up a great practical school of scientific medicine, greater than in this city, nowhere has the student greater opportunities for practical study. I early saw that these advantages were within our reach, added Dr. W., and I am, while fully alive to the services of my colleagues, not backward in affirming that amidst great disheartenings at various times, I have always borne a cheerful spirit that the day would arrive when you, gentlemen, would be able to possess the advantages which we this day present for your acceptance. Dr. W. detailed many circumstances occurring during the past twenty years, connected with the modified plans of improvements which had been in part rejected and in part adopted, until with the concurrence and aid of the Board of Governors, the ample arrangement now effected had been permanently secured. I am most solicitous, added Dr. W., that these apartments shall also contain a museum of morbid anatomy, and I solicit that every member of our profession who may obtain such a specimen, will add it to our collection. Little time will elapse ere such a museum must become a treasure of inestimable importance. The laws of the state passed not long ago, under most judicious limitation, has made the fullest provision for the materials of our labors: an Hospital, that at a common average, finds accommodations for some six or seven thousand individuals, annually, afflicted with every variety of medical or surgical infirmity, it must be admitted, cannot but furnish a great field for the noblest humanity in the two-fold act of healing and instruction.

At the conclusion of his address, Dr. Wood announced to the students of the three medical colleges of this city that two premiums, one of fifty dollars, and the other of twenty-five dollars would be awarded by him for the two best anatomical preparations, prepared and presented by them to the proposed Museum: the decision on the merits of the several preparations to be made by the respective surgical and anatomical professors of the Colleges, and a suitable testimonial to the successful competitors be given, signed by the said professors.

Dr. Wood sat down amidst the cheers of a gratified audience.

After some minor business was transacted the meeting adjourned.